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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KATHMANDU 003207

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: POLITICAL LEADERS AGREE THAT MAOIST FEAR MUST BE
DRAINED

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

1. (C) In separate December 11 meetings with the Ambassador, MK Nepal, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) and Sher Bahadur Deuba, President of the Nepali Congress-Democratic (NC-D), agreed that effective management of Maoist weapons was critical to the future of a peaceful democratic system in Nepal. Nepal denied an earlier suggestion to the Ambassador by Bhim Rawal, Central Committee Member of the CPN-UML, that the CPN-UML had been considering a broad coalition with the Maoists to contest the Constituent Assembly elections. Deuba and Rawal recounted continued Maoist abuses and intimidation in western Nepal, while MK Nepal described an improved situation in other parts of the country. Nepal stressed that the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) needed to increase pressure on the Maoists to stop abuses by strongly enforcing law and order. MK Nepal stated that the Maoists were in the process of changing their organizational structure to concentrate their leadership in district headquarters instead of remote areas. All the leaders suggested that education and leadership were needed to create a conducive atmosphere for free and fair elections. MK Nepal insisted that elections must be held by June at all costs. Both Deuba and Nepal were critical of the other's alleged collaboration with the Maoists.

Effective Arms Management Necessary

2. (C) In separate meetings on December 11 with the Ambassador, MK Nepal, General Secretary of the CPN-UML, and Sher Bahadur Deuba, President of the NC-D, agreed that effective management of Maoist weapons was critical to the future of peaceful democracy in Nepal. Nepal stated that effective management of Maoist weapons was necessary, but that even without weapons, the Maoists could intimidate and coerce people. He declared that even a stone was enough of a weapon to be used against people, and the only solution was for the Maoists to give up violence. He declared that, "the threat to the people is not from weapons, it is from the

Maoist cadre." Deuba similarly stated that, in order to ensure a free and fair election, Maoist arms needed to be managed before an interim constitution was concluded. Nepal said that the most important thing was to have effective and strict enforcement of law and order across the country, and for the political leadership to give strong orders to the police.

13. (C) The Ambassador highlighted the importance of a strong international presence for monitoring to be effective. He told Deuba and Nepal that without the robust support of the UN and the international community, including large numbers of international monitors, Nepalis might not view the disarmament process as legitimate. Nepal agreed that the UN needed to come in and take responsibility for managing and registering the Maoist camps, but added that he feared the UN bureaucracy could make that very difficult. Deuba worried about the proposal to use ex-Gurkha soldiers to monitor and register the camps, since many of them had family in Nepal and could easily be cowed by the Maoists.

A Unified Front of CPN-UML and Maoists?

14. (C) In a meeting on December 8, Bhim Rawal, Central Committee Member of the CPN-UML, told the Ambassador that some in the leadership of the CPN-UML, including MK Nepal, were keen on a broad coalition with the Maoists to contest the Constituent Assembly elections. When this had been discussed at the last central committee meeting of the CPN-UML, there had been much disagreement and the debate had been postponed. However, Rawal said, MK Nepal had convened a committee of three people led by Central Committee Member Bam

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Dev Gautam (a CPN-UML member with strong ties to the Maoists) to look into the possibility of the two parties joining forces. In their December 11 meeting, the Ambassador asked Nepal whether such a coalition was in the offing, and Nepal replied that it was not. Nepal stated that the party was looking into the idea simply so it could say it had covered all its bases; there was, however, no plan for unification and there could not be one until the Maoists completely abandoned violence. However, Nepal suggested that the CPN-UML was interested in joining forces with other, smaller leftist parties to make a stronger showing during the Constituent Assembly elections. Nepal also stated that some lower-level cadre were beginning to defect from the Maoists in the countryside to join the CPN-UML.

Maoist Abuses: Down in Some Places and Up in Others

15. (C) Rawal informed the Ambassador that during a recent trip to Kailali and Achham Districts in far-western Nepal, he had seen no letup in Maoist intimidation and abuses. Maoist combatants in western Nepal were still carrying weapons and roaming around in combat fatigues in direct violation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed between the Government of Nepal (GON) and the Maoists on November 21. Rawal visited the cantonment sites in Kailali, and said that the camps had no fences or housing, and were nothing but large fields. He stated that Maoist militia in the districts were telling people that "even though our guns will be locked up, we still have the keys. We don't even need guns because we are making lathis (large wooden sticks) and will beat anyone who votes against us in the elections." Rawal said that he had spoken at a political program in one village in western Nepal where the Maoist leader of the village had shown up in combat fatigues and spoken before him at the program. Intimidation, he stressed, was still at a very high level, although the CPN-UML cadre felt a bit safer doing their work in the countryside than they did before. Deuba also reported continued extortion and abduction across the country, including in the Kathmandu Valley.

PLA Recruitment Drive

¶16. (C) Rawal said that the Maoists were already lying about who was going into their cantonments. The son of a friend of Rawal's in western Nepal had been abducted by the Maoists and taken to one of the camps. When the man went to the camp to find his son, he saw his son's classmates, who had been taken on the same day, although did not see his son in the camp. The man then confronted the commander of the camp about this, who merely replied that the man was mistaken, and that all the people in the camp had been in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) for at least two years. Rawal worried that the UN would have a very difficult time weeding out "real" combatants from new recruits. (Note: This reinforces other reports that Post has heard that the recent Maoist recruitment drive was a means to fill up the cantonments. End note.)

Parts of Nepal Better

¶17. (C) MK Nepal told the Ambassador that, although the situation in western Nepal was still pretty bad, the situation in parts of eastern Nepal, specifically in Jhapa District, was getting better. In Jhapa, he said, the CPN-UML had been able to do its work unhindered, and the people were much less afraid of the Maoists than before. He also highlighted that in Bardiya (western Nepal) a group of parents recently had stood up to the Maoists after they had abducted their children for recruitment into the PLA, and the Maoists had stopped. Nepal hoped that people would continue to do such things and show the Maoists that they had no popular support in the countryside.

Increased Pressure Can Change the Maoists

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¶18. (C) MK Nepal stressed to the Ambassador that the Maoists in Nepal were different from other Maoists, and he held out hope that strong pressure from all fronts could cause the Maoists to really come into mainstream politics. He worried that the Maoists had gotten into many "bad habits," like intimidation and extortion, and suggested that they needed to be pressured to stop these activities. Deuba and Nepal both stated that the SPA needed to criticize the Maoists strongly when they did something that was wrong, and conversely needed to encourage them when they did something that was right.

Maoist Reorganization: A Move to the Cities

¶19. (C) MK Nepal said that Maoist Supremo Prachanda had told him recently that the Maoists were undergoing a comprehensive reorganization of their party, moving from a revolutionary insurgent force to a mainstream democratic party. Whereas the Maoist leadership used to be in remote areas of the country, hiding in the jungle, the leadership had been moving to centralized locations in each of the 75 district headquarters and many villages around the country. Prachanda had told Nepal that the Maoist cadre now planned to stay in the administrative headquarters, making it easier to assert control over their lower level cadre. Prachanda also described a plan to move cadre back to the areas where they were from to win over the hearts and minds of the people.

Election Date: No Agreement

¶10. (C) MK Nepal insisted that the June 2007 date set for the Constituent Assembly elections must not change. He gave three reasons for this: 1) a long transition period would be bad for Nepal, 2) people might get frustrated with the inaction of an interim government that could not make

important decisions, and 3) the sooner there was a real government the sooner the country could move forward with a national agenda, especially on economic development. Conversely, Deuba did not think there could be a free and fair election in the country until there had been at least six months without any perceived threat from the Maoists against the people of Nepal. Therefore, Deuba argued, it might be difficult to hold elections by June 2007.

Party Politics: Fingerprinting

¶11. (C) Both Deuba and Nepal charged other parties in the SPA with being too close to the Maoists. Nepal squarely placed the blame on the Nepali Congress (NC) and the NC-D for forming coalitions with the Maoists in rural areas in order to take votes away from the CPN-UML. Such "games" were dangerous, Nepal said, and were likely to end up hurting the NC and NC-D in the long run. Deuba expressed his dismay at the in-fighting within the SPA over ministerial positions, and worried about the future of the SPA as an alliance.

Comment

¶12. (C) The CPN-UML and NC-D seem ready to be hard on the Maoists for their activities in private, but neither are publicly taking a strong stand. The Ambassador's message was heard loud and clear by both parties: effective management of Maoist weapons will require a large international presence on the ground. Both parties agreed. It is becoming increasingly urgent to get large numbers of monitors on the ground in Nepal in order to ensure the success of the arms management process, and ultimately the peaceful transition to democracy. The movement of Maoist cadre to district headquarters does not strike us as a necessarily benign development, but rather as an attempt on the part of the Maoists to spread their ability to intimidate to the urban areas. Both Deuba and Nepal touted the importance of

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continued SPA unity, but it was clear from their comments about other parties that electioneering has begun in Nepal and that the Seven Parties view each other as campaign rivals.
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